The Basics

Overview

First things first: who is "a" parent and how do we define "parent" in our ever-changing social culture? As our society evolves, family structures are also changing and roles are being redefined. Therefore, it is important to be clear to whom we are referring and why.

Educational institutions whether schools, colleges or universities are bound by certain regulatory requirements to meet various standards or comply with funding regulations.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)/No Child Left Behind (NCLB) includes a definition for "parent".

Legal Definition of "Parent"

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)/ No Child Left Behind (NCLB) includes definitions for "parent" and "parental involvement."

> "(31) PARENT.—The term 'parent' includes a legal guardian or other person standing in loco parentis (such as a grandparent or stepparent with whom the child lives, or a person who is legally responsible for the child's welfare)."[33]

Parent Engagement Committee Definition

Parent: significant adult who cares about a child. The Parent Engagement Committee acknowledges that the term "parent" can be restrictive and limiting. We recognize that all family members – parents; stepparents; parents' significant others; foster parents; siblings; grandparents; aunts, uncles, and other extended family; friends and neighbors; and others – often contribute in important ways to a child's education and development.[34]

Parent: significant adult who cares about a child.

Toolkit Definition of "Parent"

For the purpose of this document, we utilize the term **"parent"** to indicate any adult who plays a significant role in a student's life. This term may be used interchangeably with the word "family" or the phrase "parents and family" in reference to those who share responsibility for the well-being of a child.[35]